

STRENGTHENING THE PUBLIC'S HEALTH AND FIGHTING BIOTERRORISM

• Mr. AKAKA. Mr. President, I rise today to talk about strengthening our medical care community against the threat of bioterrorism. As chairman of the Subcommittee on International Security, Proliferation, and Federal Services, I held a hearing in July 2001 where representatives from the Federal Emergency Management Agency and the Department of Health and Human Services discussed the activities underway by dedicated Federal employees across the Government to prepare our communities for a biological crisis. On October 17, 2001, I co-chaired a joint Subcommittee/Governmental Affairs Committee hearing to discuss further the public health implications of bioterrorism. Coincidentally the hearing was held on the same day the Hart Senate Office Building was shut down because of the anthrax attack.

Through these hearings, and several others held in both the House and Senate, we have learned that the Federal Government is not unprepared to deal with bioterrorism. However, preparedness levels are not uniform or consistent across the United States, and there are considerable and serious problems. As I said during our hearing in October, while not unprepared, America is clearly under prepared.

Now, almost 6 months to the day after the first anthrax letter arrived in Hart, I urge my colleagues to join me in sponsoring two initiatives that are modest in nature but which have profound impact on our fight against bioterrorism.

The first initiative, S. 1560 the Biological Agent-Environmental Detection Act, will increase our efforts to develop the necessary tools to minimize the impact of bioterrorism by reducing the number of people exposed and alerting authorities and medical personnel to a threat before symptoms occur. Current methods are not adequate to monitor the air, water, and food supply continuously in order to detect rapidly the presence of biological agents.

The Biological Agent-Environmental Detection Act establishes an inter-agency task force to coordinate public-private research in environmental monitoring and detection tools of bioterrorist agents. The act authorized appropriations totaling \$40 million to the Department of Health and Human Services to encourage cooperative agreements between Federal Government and industry or academic laboratory centers, and pursue new technologies, approaches and programs to identify clandestine laboratory locations. The act also establishes a means of testing, verifying and calibrating new detection and surveillance tools and techniques developed by the private sector. Secretary of Health and Human Services Thompson supported this legislation and the authorization amount during the Subcommittee/Gov-

ernmental Affairs Committee Hearing in October.

Senator ROCKEFELLER and I introduced S. 1561 Strengthening bioterrorism preparedness through expanded National Disaster Medical System training programs. This measure provides training for health care workers for bioterrorism or any biological crisis. Strengthening the public health system is very important and is being addressed by several congressional and administrative initiatives. But public health does not translate necessarily to the medical community. Creating a critical line of defense against bioterrorism must involve health care professionals. Training of emergency medical technicians, physicians, and nurses has been hindered by a lack of economic incentives for hospitals and clinics to make available formal training opportunities.

In fiscal year 2001, the Department of Veterans Affairs, VA, was appropriated \$800,000 to establish a training program for VA staff for the National Disaster Medical System, which is made up of VA and the Departments of Defense and Health and Human Services, and the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

One such training program, open to VA and Department of Defense staff as well as their community counterparts, took place earlier this year. The Akaka-Rockefeller bill expands this program by drawing on established partnerships between the 173 VA hospitals and community hospitals and using existing VA resources to implement a telemedicine and training program for local health care providers in bioterrorism preparedness and response.

In formulating a congressional response to bioterrorism, we must not forget the role our local and community hospitals would play in such a crisis. We must provide our professionals, public health officials, and emergency managers the earliest possible warning of pending outbreaks. I know our scientists and engineers can develop robust, effective, and accurate detection methods. Likewise, I believe we have the best and most dedicated health care staff in the world. They deserve to have the training and information needed to protect and treat Americans in instances of biological terrorism.●

THE PRUDENTIAL SPIRIT OF COMMUNITY AWARDS

• Mr. ENZI. Mr. President, it is with a great deal of pride that I share with my colleagues the names of several Wyoming students who are being honored for their outstanding community service with a Prudential Spirit of Community Award.

These awards, in their seventh year, are presented by Prudential Financial, together with the National Association of Secondary School Principals. They honor the young people of our State who were nominated for their remark-

able acts of volunteerism. This year a record 28,000 young men and women were considered for this special award.

The two top youth volunteers from my State are Chelsie Gorzalka, 17, of Clearmont and Tabetha Waits, 12, of Rawlins. We can be proud of each of them for the difference they have made in their communities. Their efforts help to make their home towns better places to live.

Chelsie Gorzalka is a member of the Sheridan County Extension 4-H and a senior at Arvada/Clearmont High School. Chelsie received her nomination for the puppet plays she puts on around the State in an effort to educate our young children about the dangers of tobacco and drugs.

Tabetha Waits of Rawlins Middle School was nominated for her organization of "You Can't Break Our Stride" an all-school walkathon that raised nearly \$10,000 to assist the families of those who were affected by the September 11 terrorist attacks.

These two award winners, along with the two honorees who have received this award from each of the other States, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico, will receive a \$1,000 award, an engraved silver medallion, and a trip to the Nation's capital. During their stay here, ten from among that group of finalists will be named America's top youth volunteers for 2002.

In addition to Chelsie and Tabetha, I would like to congratulate our State's two distinguished finalists.

Cory Poulos, 18, was nominated by Natrona County High School. He organized and participated in a Roof-Sit fundraiser that collected more than \$5,000 to benefit "Families of Freedom," a post secondary education fund for children whose parents were injured or killed in the September 11 terrorist attacks.

Mark Sabec, 17, was nominated by Natrona County High School as well. He created "No Casualties," a peer and adult mentoring project aimed at reducing the number of school dropouts in his community.

Our congratulations goes out to these fine young people and to all those who participated in the awards program. Thanks to them, it is clear that our future is in good hands.●

IN SUPPORT OF ONCOLOGY NURSES AND ONCOLOGY NURSING SOCIETY

• Mr. REED. Mr. President, I would like to bring to the attention of my colleagues the important role that oncology nurses play in the care of patients diagnosed with cancer.

This year alone 1,284,900 Americans will hear the words "You have cancer". Everyday, oncology nurses see the pain and suffering caused by cancer and understand the physical, emotional, and financial challenges that people with cancer face throughout their diagnosis and treatment.